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Quebec

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Quebec, the largest of Canada's ten provinces, is also the oldest. Beginning with Samuel de Champlain's *habitation* on the banks of the St. Lawrence in 1608, Quebec has played a crucial part in opening up North America. Even today, new regions are being developed. Northern Quebec, more than twice the size of France, has vast reserves of minerals, hydroelectric power and forest lands. Immense iron ore deposits are being mined in eastern Quebec and there has been continuous exploration in the James Bay region. The future is promising. Running parallel with this economic boom is a wide-ranging cultural renaissance that has buttressed the French fact in North America.

Geography

There are three geographic areas in Quebec, which run north to south down the province. They are the Canadian Shield, the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Appalachian Mountains. The Canadian Shield is the most spectacular region. It extends from Canada's Arctic waters in the north to the Laurentians, the world's oldest mountain range, in the south, and features interesting contrasts of plant and animal life. In the northernmost parts of the Shield, the ground is permanently frozen, and only dwarf birch trees (scarcely 30 cm in height) and a lichen called caribou moss can grow there. Farther south are groves of stunted trees but also productive

forests used by Quebec's pulp and paper and lumbering industries. Most of the province's population lives in the St. Lawrence Lowlands where the soil is most fertile. The land is cut by thousands of lakes and rivers, covering 290,000 km² of Quebec. It is here that the mighty St. Lawrence, one of the world's longest rivers, flows eastward into the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the majesty celebrated by Quebec composer André Gagnon. And, finally, the terrain becomes rocky as the St. Lawrence Lowlands give way to the Appalachian belt.

Climate

The duration of Quebec's winter varies from region to region, but snow normally covers the ground from 12 to 23 weeks. On hearing of England's conquest of New France in 1759, the French author Voltaire dismissed the lost colony as only "a few acres of snow". This was, needless to say, a glaring oversimplification. Winter temperatures, although they do plummet far below freezing, are accompanied by dazzling blue skies. And summers can be very hot. The blossoming trees and flowers of spring and the colourful foliage of autumn make today's description of Quebec, *la belle province*, much more apt.

Population

Quebec has a population of 6,289,600, of which approximately 79 per cent is of French origin and 11 per cent of

British origin. The bulk of the remaining 10 per cent consists of other European groups.

The native peoples, the Indian and Inuit, live mainly in northern Quebec. Fort Chimo, Quebec's leading Inuit community, was founded in 1828 as a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. The Cree nation, some 6,500 in number, are in the southwest. Modern development has brought profound changes in their lives, and they have combined native traditions with the styles of modern Quebec.

History

It is almost certain that the first men on Quebec soil, several thousand years ago, were Asians, who crossed the Bering Strait and spread out across North America. Some of these — called Indians by the first Europeans, who thought they had reached the East — settled in Quebec. The country immediately north of the St. Lawrence River was inhabited chiefly by two scattered Indian groups — the Montagnais and the Algonquins. They were nomadic and lived off the land by hunting moose and other forest animals and by spearing salmon and eels in the rivers, lakes and sea.

French explorer Jacques Cartier and his sailors landed in Gaspé in July 1534 and claimed the new territory on behalf of the King of France. Cartier made two later voyages in 1535 and 1542, but interest in the new colony

waned until 1608, when Samuel de Champlain constructed a wooden *habitation* at a spot the Indians named "Québec". It was a natural rock citadel with a commanding view of the St. Lawrence. The French leader was soon on friendly terms with local Indians, who induced him in 1609 to participate in a raid against a neighbouring tribe — the Iroquois. Thus, a bitter conflict began between the French and the Iroquois which lasted more than 100 years. Fearing that the existence of their colony was at stake, French authorities intervened in 1672 by sending a new governor (Comte de Frontenac), a new intendant (Jean Talon) and a new bishop (Bishop Laval) to Quebec. This marked the beginning of a remarkable period in the fortunes of "New France", as Quebec was then known. The economy flourished and the population grew.

A series of European wars punctuated the first half of the eighteenth century. The Anglo-French rivalry in Europe led to periodic fighting in North America, which came to a climax in 1759. The British army, under General James Wolfe, landed at Quebec City, and after a sharp battle, defeated the French forces under the command of Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm. Both generals died during the engagement on the Plains of Abraham. With the fall of New France, a British military administration was organized to govern the colony.

Anxious to avoid the expenses of administering another colony, they did not greatly interfere in the local way of life. They did, however, implement a basic administrative system under the terms of the Proclamation Act (1763) and later the Quebec Act (1774). The Quebec Act proclaimed an extension of the colony's boundaries, gave full freedom to the Roman Catholic Church, maintained the seigneurial system of land tenure and permitted the use of French civil law.

During the American Revolution, American troops besieged Quebec City throughout the winter of 1775 in an attempt to seize the colony. They were not successful.

With the coming of peace, attention turned towards internal political reform. The Constitutional Act of 1791 divided Quebec into two provinces — Upper Canada and Lower Canada. It provided for a nominated legislative council and an elected legislative assembly in each province. The first election under this arrangement took place in 1792. Reforms, however, did not keep pace with the growing demand for change.

Heading the reform movement in Lower Canada was Louis-Joseph Papineau, who commanded the respect of the French-speaking majority in the legislative assembly. In 1834 Papineau and his followers issued a long list of grievances for which they

demandred redress. When Britain refused to allow the election of members to the legislative council, a general insurrection broke out in 1837. Fortunately, there was little violence but the rebellion served as a spur to prod the British into re-examining their policies. Lord Durham was appointed Governor-General and given authority to study the problems and recommend solutions.

When he returned to England, Durham proposed that the two Canadas be reunited and granted responsible government. This occurred in 1841 under the provisions of the Act of Union. Five years later, reformers assumed the reins of government.

The reformers, led by Louis Lafontaine, supported the political and cultural recovery of the French Canadians. In 1854 the moderates in the reform party joined forces with those in the Conservative party — the British merchants of Montreal. This small group of political figures and businessmen formulated plans for the confederation of the provinces of British North America, and dominated the political scene until 1896.

The British North America Act of 1867 was a practical compromise in order to resolve certain economic, political and military issues. The Act enshrined French as an official language. "Canada East" became the province of Quebec, with its own provincial government and specified powers in social and civil affairs. The

thirty years after Confederation were characterized by racial, cultural and religious disagreements but when the period ended, Canada had a new leader. He was Sir Wilfrid Laurier, a French-Canadian Catholic.

The political rise of the federal Liberal Party in 1896 corresponded to the growth in Quebec of large enterprises, especially in such sectors as hydroelectricity, forest industry and mining. Laurier encouraged national unity and brought provincial statesmen from across Canada into his cabinet. He remained in power until 1911 and in that time helped to establish a Canadian presence in world affairs.

His successor, Robert Borden, leader of the Conservative party, guided Canada throughout the years of World War I. When Borden, who had committed a Canadian corps of volunteers to the fighting, ordered conscription of childless males, there was general dismay in Quebec and an immediate political crisis. The outcry was not confined to Quebec and there were serious misgivings throughout Canada. Borden was obliged to call an election at the end of 1917. He retained power, but Laurier's Liberals won in Quebec.

Quebec politics

In the 1930s Quebec provincial politics was characterized by polarization along religious, linguistic and cultural lines.

There were many clashes in the legislative assembly and debate was known for the stridency of its tone.

In 1936 a new political party came to power in Quebec's provincial legislature. The *Union Nationale* under the leadership of Maurice Duplessis proclaimed its commitment to promoting Quebec nationalism and supporting free enterprise and the church. In 1939 Duplessis lost a provincial election, but for the most part he and his party retained undisputed rule over Quebec until his sudden death in 1959.

Duplessis governed with the belief that Quebec should stand on its traditions — a culture founded on religion and an economy founded on agriculture. This system of social-religious-political control lasted until the "Quiet Revolution" of the early 1960s.

A renewed Quebec

Until World War II the power of the church was almost unquestioned in Quebec. But with the war, the winds of change blew hard and the church was unable to withstand the pressure. The church held its own in the rural elections, but Quebecers slipped from its influence in the cities and towns. The Liberal government of Jean Lesage, elected in 1960, carried through major reforms in education, labour relations (by permitting public employees to form unions and to go on strike) and social affairs. Several

small nationalist parties were formed during the 1960s. In 1967, a century after Canadian Confederation, difference within the Liberal Party led to the defection of René Lévesque, a former Lesage minister. He formed a new alliance in 1968, which was named the "Parti Québécois". It became a focal point for those who advocated independence for Quebec. In the election of 1976 the Parti Québécois under Lévesque won a landslide victory. During the campaign the Parti Québécois promised to bring a better and more efficient government to the people of Quebec and to hold a province-wide referendum on Quebec's future within Canadian Confederation. Soon after, Premier Lévesque introduced an ambitious legislative program designed to increase the use of the French language in Quebec. The promised referendum will be held in the spring of 1980, when Federalists and advocates of "Sovereignty Association" will present their respective policies.

Agriculture

In earlier days Quebec's population was chiefly rural, and villages tended to follow old seigneurial patterns. Before World War I, the typical farm in Quebec was relatively small. This pattern began to change after the war: today many farmers have taken over neighbouring farms and thus made their units more productive. Approximately 16 per cent of Quebec's total

land surface is under cultivation. The most significant agricultural regions lie near the St. Lawrence river and in the eastern townships.

Dairying is the most important facet of Quebec agriculture; it has been a staple since the earliest days. It now accounts for 40 per cent of farm receipts from animal production. A typical dairy herd in Quebec consists of 50 to 60 head, of which 30 are milk-producing cows. Swine production is in second place and there are some 12,000 swine producers.

Crops account for 10 per cent of Quebec's total agricultural income. The most abundant are alfalfa and corn. Other important field crops include potatoes, tobacco and sugar beets. Fruit and vegetable production is carried out on Montreal Island and in the southern counties which have a suitable climate and rich organic soil. Carrots and sweet corn make up nearly half the value of the fresh vegetable market. Apples and strawberries are the most important fruits. Much of the apple crop is processed as cider.

Many farmers gain further income from stands of maple trees which are tapped for sugar sap every spring. The maple sugar industry is one of the oldest in North America, adopted by early white settlers from local Indians. The tapping season begins in mid-March and continues well into April. Quebec has 75 per cent of Canada's

production and much is exported throughout the world.

Forestry

The pulp and paper industry is centred on the coniferous softwoods of the Gaspé Peninsula and northern Quebec. These softwoods comprise the bulk of Quebec's commercial forest. Northern Quebec has millions of hectares of boreal pulpwood forest. These are among Quebec's most valued assets. Conservation of these forests is a great concern and the provincial government operates its own fleet of Canadian CL-215 water-bombers to control the spread of forest fires. The CL-215 was designed and built in Montreal.

Quebec's timber industry is lucrative and supports 500 sawmills, but the pulp and paper industry is much larger. Quebec produces more than a third of Canada's pulp and paper and half of Canada's newsprint (the latter represents 20 per cent of world production). At least 60 plants process pulp and paper. Some are integrated plants which undertake the entire process from grinding logs to rolling newsprint.

Mining

Canada produces 40 per cent of the world's chrysotile (an asbestos) and 80 per cent of it comes from Quebec. The first asbestos mine in Quebec was opened a century ago in the eastern townships. Since then a number of mines have been developed along a

100-km belt extending east from the town of Asbestos, the site of the world's largest known deposit.

Traditionally, Quebec's major strengths in metal mining have been copper and zinc. Major new iron-ore deposits are now being developed and Quebec is likely to become Canada's largest iron-ore producer. In 1910 a small lead-zinc mine opened near Quebec City and major deposits were discovered at Noranda. Massive production began there in 1951. Nearby are crushers and concentrators which process the ore before it is transported for shipment by sea.

Much of Quebec's mineral potential has still to be explored, but Quebec is a world leader in mineral refining. The Noranda copper facility in Montreal handles copper from mines throughout eastern Canada. It processes more than half of Canada's refined copper and is the largest copper refinery in the world. Before 1972, Quebec's steel industry was modest and relied on scrap metal as its raw material. The development of important iron-ore mines in the northeast has encouraged the development of an integrated steel industry.

Manufacturing and industry

Quebec has an active textile and clothing industry. Indeed, Quebec fashions are sold around the world and have found particularly good markets in Asia. Much of Canada's winter-wear is designed and fashioned in Quebec —

both in the capital-intensive mills which are highly mechanized, and in the labour-intensive clothing factories of Montreal. Montreal is also the centre of the boot and shoe industry.

A significant proportion of Canada's organic and inorganic heavy chemicals are produced in Quebec. There are a number of petroleum industries which refine and use imported petroleum products from South America and the Middle East.

With approximately 6,700 sailboats scheduled to be built in 1979, Montreal has become Canada's sailboat manufacturing centre. In the building of dinghys and daysails (boats without sleeping accommodation) and under-30-foot keel boats designed for weekend regattas, Montreal monopolizes the market.

The Quebec furniture industry, one of the oldest manufacturing industries in Canada, employs 15,000 persons, with an expected sale in 1979 of approximately \$600 million. More than 65 per cent of all furniture bought by the people of Quebec is also made there.

Having gained a wide reputation in their field, two electronic groups in Montreal have contracted to outfit the United States of America's fleet of four Space Shuttles by 1984. Together with SPAR Aerospace Ltd. in Toronto, Ontario these groups will be supplying three Remote Manipulator Systems that will permit astronauts within the Shuttle to retrieve or move payloads in space.

Hydroelectric power

Among Quebec's greatest assets is its immense hydroelectric potential. So far only a portion has been used. The basis of Quebec's great hydroelectric generating industry which serves the province and its neighbours, is the provincially-owned Hydro-Quebec. Hydro-Quebec's first major development project involved two rivers, the Manicouagan and the Outardes. This was in 1959. Manic 5, one of the generating stations built by Hydro-Quebec, was the site of the world's largest multiple-arch dam.

Another project began in the James Bay area in 1972. This will enable Hydro-Quebec to keep pace with consumer demand during the 1980s. The La Grande project entails constructing four major generating plants, huge dams, and a transportation and communications system.

Communications

Since the seventeenth century, the St. Lawrence has been Quebec's major communications artery. It now is lined with a succession of ports which are in turn connected to inland centres by a comprehensive network of highways and railroads. Montreal is still Canada's most important port, located as it is on the St. Lawrence Seaway, which is one of the world's busiest water routes. Although the St. Lawrence River is frozen five months of the year,

icebreakers keep channels open and Montreal is accessible during the winter to cargo ships with reinforced hulls.

Montreal is at the crossroads for southern railway routes and is the eastern starting-point for Canada's two trans-continental railways — Canadian National and Canadian Pacific.

Quebec's well developed highways in the south are gradually being extended to the more northern parts of the province.

Arts and culture

Quebec's folk *chanson* is a lasting tribute to Quebec's early days. Many of these folk songs were sung by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century voyageurs who canoed on Quebec's rivers and lakes. A large number were adopted from old French originals — notably *Alouette*.

Félix Leclerc is, perhaps, Quebec's first modern *chansonnier*. In the 1950s he travelled the length and breadth of the province with simple songs celebrating the uniqueness of its people. He sang of everyday life and of farmers, log-drivers and lumberjacks and encouraged those who heard him to take pride in their French heritage and culture. Gilles Vigneault followed his footsteps. Soon they were joined by Claude Léveillé, Jean Pierre Ferland, Pauline Julien, Louise Forestier, Robert Charlebois and Diane Dufresne.

This re-awakening of French-Canadian culture spread into other spheres. Novelists like Anne Hébert, Roger Fournier, and Yves Thériault came into prominence. Their books reflected the feelings and concerns of Quebec as did those of Hubert Aquin, Jacques Godbout, Suzanne Paradis, Marie-Claire Blais and Réjean Ducharme, to name a few.

But not all Quebec writing is in French. Many of Mordecai Richler's novels and short stories and Leonard Cohen's novels, poems and English chansons are based on their personal experiences in Montreal. Hugh MacLennan of McGill University is one of Canada's best-known novelists and essayists.

Tourists in both old Montreal and old Quebec are quickly attracted by artists they find working in the open air. These artists reflect Quebec's style of modern painting which reaches back to the influence of the Montreal Art Association at the turn of the century. After World War II several artists banded together to form, in time, *Les Peintres Automatistes* and later *Les Plasticiens*. The political views of painters such as Alfred Pellan, Paul-Emile Borduas and later Léon Bellefleur and Jean Paul Riopelle are revealed in their impressionistic styles, which have a high popular appeal.

Quebec is famous for woodcarving, which dates back to the origins of New France when Bishop Laval brought

artisans from Europe to carve embellishments on church interiors. Inuit carving from northern Quebec is a form of sculpture which is extremely popular.

In the performing arts, both traditional and modern forms are flourishing. Playwrights such as Marcel Dubé, Françoise Loranger, Gratien Gélinas and Michel Tremblay remind their audiences of Quebec's unique history. The vitality of theatre in the province is stimulated further by Canada's National Theatre School in Montreal, which offers parallel courses for French-speaking and English-speaking actors and a co-lingual production course. Students of the school are drawn from all over Canada.

Quebec's film industry has had critical success. Canada's first known film was made in Quebec City in 1897, when British engineers erected the monument to Generals Montcalm and Wolfe. The federal government's National Film Board (NFB) provided opportunities for young Quebec filmmakers to experiment and gain experience in cinematography. The careers of Quebec film directors Claude Jutra, Michel Brault and Gilles Carle started with the NFB.

Sports, recreation and tourism

Quebeckers lay special claim to hockey as their favourite sport. Since the 1930s, attention has focused on the Montreal *Canadiens*. Hockey heroes like Maurice "Rocket" Richard and Guy Lafleur have attracted throngs of idolizing fans through their determined style of play.

The Montreal Alouettes football team and the Montreal Expos baseball team also have massive followings.

Winter sports — snowshoeing, ice-fishing, downhill and cross-country skiing — flourish in the province.

Tourism is important to the provincial economy. As the French-speaking centre of North America, Montreal's attraction for tourists from across the continent is unrivaled. In the midst of this modern city, Old Montreal with its fine seventeenth- to nineteenth-century architecture is a living reminder of the past. Off narrow streets, visitors discover Montreal's best restaurants and craft shops. It is no accident that a sophisticated tourism and hotel school opened in

Montreal in 1968. Quebec City is similarly known for its “Old World” flavour, excellent cuisine and its annual winter carnival.

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Quebec has retained its power of attraction with its cultural individuality, its physical beauty and economic wealth. *La belle province* is a land of contrasts, with ancient countryside trails and the modern high-rise world of Montreal. Quebec is a province proud of its history and distinctive culture. Its contribution to Canada’s heritage is indeed unique.





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